

Lindon CHARACTER Connection

Conflict Resolution

September 2009



Conflict Resolution: Can only happen when we attack the problem, not the person.

“Whenever you’re in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude” – William James

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Principles for Families and Tips for Parents

We cannot avoid conflict in our lives, at home, at work and even at play. Wherever people interact, there is a potential for conflict.

What are some principles of family conflict resolutions?

A family can be compared to a four-wheeled cart where each of the wheels is free-wheeling. As long as all four wheels face front, the cart rolls along nice and smoothly. But if one of the wheels turns itself crossways to the other three, we have a problem. We have a family in conflict. That family is in need of some basic family conflict resolution skills.

The first thing to be done is to identify the problem. That’s very important. You can’t solve a problem unless you really know what it is. It involves talking to one another and listening to one another. How do these problems make you feel? Write down un-met needs and wants. The process of writing helps diffuse anger and frustration. It helps a person to think rationally. After identifying the problem, the second step is to practice the art of mirror-listening or sometimes called reflective-listening. This is a valuable skill to acquire when a person shares their thoughts with you, either verbally or reading from a list, before you counter back with what’s on your mind say something like this. “So when (blank) happens, it makes you feel like (blank). {Add your own words to fill in the blanks!} “Am I understanding you correctly?” You are reflecting back to make sure you have understood. The person can then agree or add more explanation. Without understanding the other’s point of view, no negotiation is possible.

After identifying the problem, it is time to move on to the next step of family conflict resolution. It is time to make a plan. How are we going to solve this problem together? What are our goals for a good outcome? Both individuals are now focused on solving a problem, not battling each other. There will inevitably be give and take.

After the problem has been identified, and a plan to solve it has been created the next logical step in conflict resolution is to work the plan. Just talking solves nothing. It may involve making a contract with one another, on paper or with a handshake.

Your family cart, with all the members in it, is traveling in unison once again.

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There's a lot you can do to create a peaceful home — and teach your kids to handle conflict constructively:

The first step in managing anger and family conflict is awareness. Identify your style of dealing with anger, then recognize other OPTIONS:

- Offer alternate times or actions;
- Problem-solve in pairs or as a family;
- Tackle the issue together through compromise or collaboration;
- Ignore the problem temporarily;
- Order the necessary action clearly and respectfully;
- Nip the conflict in the bud by creating a setting that produces peace;
- Surprise or humor the angry parties.

“If the only tools you have are hammers, every problem begins to look like a nail.” The words of psychologist Abraham Maslow apply to conflict. If the only tool a child has is fighting, that will be the child's first and only method of coping with conflict.

Be a good role model. Children learn general approaches to resolving conflict by watching their parents and other adults in their lives. How do you negotiate? When do you give in? How do you see the other person's point of view? Can you afford to admit that you've been wrong?

Take every opportunity to enhance your child's self-esteem. Children are more likely to fight when they feel powerless. Give your child a voice in family discussions and decisions.

Set aside special times with your children to give them your undivided attention.

Encourage your children to express all their feelings—feelings of anger or hostility as well as sad and happy feelings. In turn, share your feelings with your children.

Check and see if your school has a conflict resolution program. If not, your PTA might work with the principal and teachers to learn more about how schools deal with conflict resolution.

*Excerpt from the PTA Parenting Guide: Programs and Resources
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Submitted by Lindon Resident

“Yes we are all different. Different customs, different foods, different mannerisms, different languages, but not so different that we cannot get along with one another. If we will disagree without being disagreeable.”
–J. Martin Kohe

“Every kind of peaceful cooperation among men is primarily based on mutual trust and only secondarily on institutions such as courts of justice and police.”
–Albert Einstein

Book List

“The Butter Battle Book”

by Dr. Seuss

“The Story of Ruby Bridges”

by Robert Coles

“The Secret of the Peaceful Warrior”

by Dan Millman



Family Activities

–Find a newspaper article about a world political conflict. Discuss or role-play different ways of resolving the problem. Then, role-play resolving everyday small conflicts.

–Make a box with potential ways to handle conflict. (For instance: conflicting parties could agree to sing their disagreements, express themselves only on paper, begin and end each turn talking with a compliment...). Agree to draw and follow a suggestion from the box the next time a conflict arises.

By Laura Clement

Kid’s Corner

The Fly and the Bald Man

There once was a bald man who was much bothered by a fly that continually wished to land on the top of his head. The man waved his hands. However, the fly still persisted in trying to walk on the man’s head. Finally the frustrated man got a fly swatter. It was difficult to maneuver the swatter to the right place, yet when it seemed close enough, he gave a hard hit. Of course, the fly easily dodged the awkward hit, and the man was left with a smarting sensation on his bald pate. *Revenge will hurt the avenger. Brawn without brain may leave one the loser in a conflict.*

We, at Character Connection, would like to focus on helping parents access character materials by using the web site located at www.lindoncharacterconnection.com.

Lindon Character Connection

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